and use of neem based products, thereby aiding waste land development, generating rural employment and providing farmers with eco-friendly/biodegradable pesticides.

Decline of interest in science

†*200. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in spite of Government and social efforts, the interest in science among students is decreasing;

(b) whether it is also a fact that universities are unable to find students for the graduate courses this year; and

(c) if so, the details of students joining the science faculty of the universities during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (c) In the present globally competitive market and availability of a wider variety of professionally oriented courses offering better job opportunities appears to have attracted students to various disciplines. This is a cyclical phenomenon with ups and downs. Student interest is influenced by a complex range of sociological, cultural and economic factors. Government has continued to take up a large number of initiatives to encourage students to take up science as a career e.g. National Children Science Congress, National Science Olympiad Programme, Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana, Swarnajayanti Fellowship for young scientists, Better Opportunities for Young Scientists in Chosen Areas of Science & Technology for training in leading international laboratories, Fast Track Programme for Young Scientists, Biotechnology fellowships to young students and scientists, CSIR Programme on youth for leadership in Science, Opportunities to young science students for interaction with Nobel laureate and visiting fellowships, summer schools and training programmes to enable students for interaction with scientists in national laboratories.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.